

# BOMBARD THEM & THEY WILL COME: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS USING A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO ENGAGE STUDENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

In-class presentations, library classes, orientation, club activities, off-site reference and case competitions, these are some of the venues where the librarians at the Goizueta Business School interact with our students. Google, our formidable competitor, requires us to be creative, proactive and flexible with our services and programming in order to achieve our objective of graduating information competent business students.

## OUR GOAL

In today's highly competitive marketplace, employers seek critical thinkers. A business graduate who can...

- Determine the nature of information needed
- Access information efficiently
- Evaluate information critically
- Apply information to a specific issue

...is a highly sought out team member in any organization. A proficient business researcher knows how to deal with ambiguity and unstructured problem solving. She knows how to find information and then present clear, actionable recommendations. We strive to contribute to our students' success by helping them become information literate, as defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher

Education (2000). Dorner (2001) remarks that a collaborative effort between faculty and librarians has proven to be the most successful method to achieve this goal, but we have found that other strategies must also be deployed before we can reach the mountaintop.

## IMPLEMENTATION

*Business Essentials: more than a one-shot chance*

In 2001, the Associate Dean of the Undergraduate BBA Program and the Business Library Director realized the BBA students were not taking advantage of the library's rich resources. They knew the highly competent business library team could implement a program to change this and thus began the Business Research Certificate program.

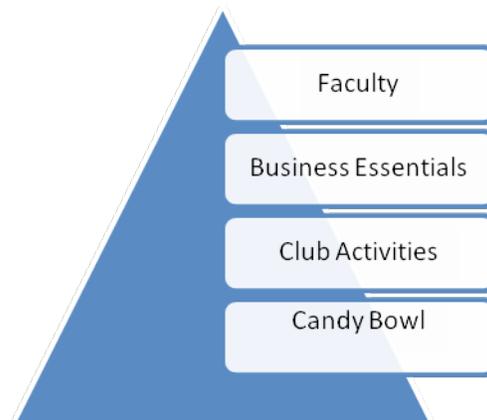
The program began with four classes and has expanded into 12 classes each semester. Each librarian sets her learning objectives and covers one or more information competency standard. The subjects covered include finance, marketing, competitive intelligence, career research and specific databases. This Millennial generation values recognition, so completion of four classes earns a business certificate. We upped the ante in 2007 by adding the Advanced Certificate. Completing six classes and then participating in a judged research competition earns Advanced Certification. In recognition of the program's success, the dean integrated it into the business school's Junior Seminar. A contributing factor to gaining credit status was the extensive web of collaboration the librarians had created and nurtured over the years with the faculty, students, career office and program staff.

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## Keys to Success

- Constantly reinventing class content to reflect changes in the curriculum and student interests
- Extensive marketing - posters in the school, table tents, posting to class online conferences, word-of-mouth, librarian cut-out, faculty referrals and school TV monitor
- Dedicated, experienced librarians who devote time to developing customized content and are open to experimenting with different teaching styles
- Continuous evaluation and implementing lessons learned



## Challenges

- Reliable assessment to measure student progress and competency
- Perfecting teaching skills
- Lack of formal integration into business school's curriculum
- Engaging more students

## LESSONS LEARNED

In 2007, a Brand Marketing class chose the library as the client for their group project. The assignment was to improve the client's brand image. Their focus was the Business Research Certificate program. They conducted extensive surveys and made recommendations, which we implemented, including: changing the program name, streamlining the registration process and offering different class times. Most significantly, the survey revealed that 53% of students have never asked a librarian for help; they are uncomfortable asking and they do not consider librarians part of their business school community.

Francis (2010) states that we cannot address information literacy in isolation. In our instruction and daily interaction with students, we must also give attention to their more basic needs. We need to address their library anxiety by building relationships.

## BOMBARD THEM AND THEY WILL COME

As the liaison to the BBA community, I took a multi-pronged approach to building relationships with the students.

## Candy Bowl

- A candy bowl at the reference desk, as suggested by the Brand Marketing class, serves as an icebreaker – making it easier for students to approach the librarian to ask a question

## Club Activities

- Communications Club: created questions for annual jeopardy event and served as judges
- Service Organization: sponsored dunk tank and volunteered to be dunked; volunteered to present at Career Day in prison, volunteered at resume day at Latin American Association
- Finance Club: secured library laptops for training event in school
- Consulting Club: located case for competition

## Case Competitions

- In collaboration with Director of Student Life, identified competitions, selected and coached teams, and recruited faculty as advisors
- Spearheaded university-wide Walmart Better Living Business Plan Challenge
- Provided research assistance to teams
- Conducted debriefs to prepare strategy for next year's teams

## Program Office

- Provided weekly reference service at school
- Taught research module in Career Management Center seminars
- Taught research session and interview candidates for scholarships with International Programs Coordinator

- Incorporated library session into off-site orientation for incoming juniors

All of the above activities resulted in a modest increase in library use; however, the librarians took a more active role in the school community. Students see us as concerned, caring members of their community, as evidenced by requests to judge student competitions, fund club activities and advertise student events in the library. Responding to their needs builds trust, which in turn will increase the likelihood that they will turn to us for research help.

## REACHING THE MOUNTAINTOP

Breivik (2005) notes that the single most effective way to increase library use is for faculty to create assignments that require thoughtful use of library resources and services. Dominic Thomas, the Process and Systems Management professor at Emory, recognized the value of information competency and was open to broad collaboration. Even before our Business Essential series obtained credit status, Thomas gave credit to his students for these classes. Student surveys revealed that the most important reason for taking Business Essential classes was to complete class assignments. It was most effective to have the library classes listed in their class syllabus, which indicates a faculty recommendation.

The group project for this class is to analyze a business and recommend operational improvements. The first section of the report is a client and industry analysis. Over the years, my involvement with the client and industry analysis assignment has included:

1. Pre-assignment survey to determine the level of the students' research skills
2. Editing the project guidelines
3. Creating database tutorial podcast
4. Training Teaching Assistants
5. Creating grading rubric and grading the assignments
6. In-class library session on research resources
7. One-on-one and group consultations throughout the semester
8. Designing research reflection that is required at course completion

Having the luxury of an entire semester enabled me to go beyond database mechanics to counseling students on how to apply their research to a specific business problem. Students submitted drafts of their client and industry analysis; the Teaching Assistants and I graded these and provided feedback. This interim step allowed them to incorporate our feedback, conduct additional research and resubmit the assignment.

## Keys to Success

- Faculty recognition of information literacy as a core competency
- Consistent and clear project requirements
- Frequent communication amongst teaching staff

## Challenges

- Reliable assessment to measure student progress and competency
- Professor is ultimately in charge; students defer to him/her
- Information competency is not a graduation requirement in the BBA program

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX COLLABORATION

In 2008, I was awarded a Fulbright Senior Specialist grant to be at Koc University in Istanbul, Turkey. The objective of my trip was to share information with the Koc librarians about our collaboration with faculty, library instruction and outreach. I learned about their best practices as well as the international curriculum at the Koc Graduate School of Business. My goal was to establish an ongoing relationship between Goizueta and Koc in the form of exchange programs, student and faculty visits and research collaborations. In 2010, I submitted a proposal with a professor for a MBA international colloquium in Turkey. It was accepted and together with the professor, I planned a 10-day trip of company and cultural visits. The students had pre- and post-research assignments. I created a LibGuide for the trip. I co-led the trip with the professor in March. We received very positive feedback from the 33 students. My involvement in this project allowed the faculty, student and deans to see librarians perform in a different environment and could lead to library involvement in other school initiatives.

Grenny (2008) found that effective influencers drive change by relying on several different sources of influence strategies at the same time. Leaders who used four or more sources of influence were four times more successful than leaders who used a single source. The Goizueta Business Librarians have found that by strategically deploying a multi-pronged approach to information literacy, we have made progress in graduating competent business researchers.

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